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SUBJECT: UNAMID PROPOSES SAFE ZONE IN MUHAJARRIYA

REF: A) KHARTOUM 125
B) KHARTOUM 116

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On February 2, UNAMID's Joint Special Representative Rodolphe Adada told CDA Fernandez that the Justice and Equality Movement has taken four defensive positions outside of Muhajarriya, while the GoS vows a large-scale attack on JEM in South Darfur. UNAMID will stay in the area, and has proposed establishing a de-militarized "safe zone" in Muhajarriya to both the GOS and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The GOS wanted more details regarding the safe zone proposal but were now reconciled to UNAMID remaining on the ground, said the JSR. Adada will travel to Ndjamena on February 3 to meet with JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim and discuss the proposed safe zone, while troop reinforcements and senior UNAMID leadership will visit Muhajarriya in the coming days.
END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) Adada opened the meeting stating (as reported reftel) that Secretary General Ban Ki-moon overturned UNAMID's initial inclination to evacuate Muhajarriya. CDA Fernandez stated that it was a good decision for the protection of civilians and IDPs, for UNAMID's reputation, and for its own safety, as JEM (reportedly in need of supplies and fuel) may have attacked UNAMID units retreating to Nyala. Adada reported that following the SYG's decision, he immediately traveled to Khartoum on February 1 to explain UNAMID's position to the GOS.

UNAMID'S "SAFE ZONE" PROPOSAL

3. (SBU) Adada reported that he and senior UNAMID staff met Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Muttriff Saddiq, Intelligence Chief Salah Ghosh, and Minister of Defense Abdul Rahim Hussein in a series of meetings on February 1 and 2. According to Adada, these GoS officials repeated the list of concerns already presented to CDA Fernandez by U/S Saddiq (reftel) including: JEM's need for provisions and fuel and the possibility that they could attack UNAMID for this supply; the GOS's belief that all civilians have fled Muhajarriya; and the GOS's intention to stage a large attack against JEM in the near future. Adada reported that he proposed creating a de-militarized safe zone near the UNAMID Muhajarriya base camp free of weapons and fighters to these GOS officials. UNAMID would be responsible for disarming all individuals in this zone, and ensuring that only civilians are allowed in the area. According to Adada the GOS officials appeared overall lukewarm but mildly accepting of the idea. Salah Ghosh appeared most open to the idea, stated Adada, while Defense Minister Hussein wants to attack and completely destroy JEM. Compared to several weeks ago, the GOS appears to have slightly backed away from a ceasefire and is now more interested in military options, stated Adada. Adada added that the GOS will probably agree to UNAMID's proposal as long as it does not strengthen JEM, but that their final response will depend on a number of factors including: whether JEM will stay in the area; if JEM leaves how they will be escorted; and how any deal now will impact ongoing discussions between the Chief Mediator, JEM, and the

GOS.

JEM TAKES A DEFENSIVE POSTURE OUTSIDE OF MUHAJARRIYA

14. (SBU) According to Adada, JEM has now left Muhajarriya, removed its heavy weapons from inside the village and the market, and established four defensive positions outside of Muhajarriya. Although UNAMID can not verify whether JEM lacks adequate provisions, JEM's defensive posture signals that JEM may be short of fuel and left with no choice but to bunker down and fight. Adada also said that the GOS appears intent on attacking JEM in Muhajarriya, saying "We need to take the GoS's words that they are going to attack very seriously, and it appears as though JEM is going to fight for its life." He noted that both Ghosh and the MOD saw this as a golden opportunity to "punish" JEM.

UNAMID TRAVEL SCHEDULE

15. (SBU) Deputy Force Commander Emmanuel Karenzi, UNAMID Civil Affairs South Sector Chief Ali Hassan, Humanitarian Coordinator Toby Lanzer, and representatives from NGOS such as MSF, Solidarite, and CHR will travel to Muhajarriya on February 3 and 4 to assess the military, logistical, and humanitarian needs in the area. About 3,000 IDPs are now huddled near the UNAMID base which is also going to be beefed up by additional heavy equipment and two additional platoons. Meanwhile, JSR Adada, Chief Mediator Bassole, and other senior UNAMID staff plan on traveling to Ndjamena to meet JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim to attempt to secure Ibrahim's approval for the safe-zone concept. Adada stated that he will directly tell Khalil Ibrahim that he and his movements are starting to lose the credibility that they gained from their Washington visit and talks with Bassole, and that it was a bad idea for "JEM to travel straight

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from Washington to Muhajarriya." Adada also stated, "I will tell Khalil directly - if you do not cooperate on this issue, you will lose." Adada noted that by giving media coverage to this meeting in Ndjamena, UNAMID can put additional pressure on JEM, even if "Khalil does not accept our safe-zone proposal."

EFFECT ON OTHER REBEL MOVEMENTS

16. (SBU) JSR Adada and UNAMID polchief Mohammad both stated that other rebel movements are beginning to coalesce around a common hatred of JEM. JEM's attacks on SLM/MM and their leaders' continued assertion that "JEM is the only movement in Darfur," has fostered renewed relationships between former allies of the Sudan Liberation Movement. Adada reported that he met the United Resistance Front's Tajadine Niam in Addis Ababa on January 31. Niam reported that a federation of movements including SLM/Unity, URF, and SLM/MM has started to form. Niam bitterly blamed the Americans and Bassole for JEM's bloody incursion. According to Niam, Minni Minnawi has become the "center piece" of this federation, and "only Minnawi may be able to unite SLM." Adada stated that this federation does not include all elements of SLA/AW, as the prominent SLA/AW Commander Muhammad Terrada appears to be coordinating with JEM in East Jebel Marra, the only prominent rebel leader doing so. Adada agreed that JEM's attack on Muhajarriya has been a "disaster for the Zaghawa tribes and the rebel movements." He also agreed that even if JEM leaves the area, the GOS will never allow Minnawi to regain full authority over his former areas of control so Khartoum will benefit from JEM's misadventure. Adada also reported that Chief Mediator Bassole's courtship of JEM has enraged many rebel movements and that his credibility is beginning to suffer. Meanwhile, Abdul Muhammad speculated that a decisive GOS victory over JEM in Muhajarriya could severely weaken, if not disable, JEM altogether. "In Darfur rebel strength is only measured by mobility and the number of landcruisers that a movement has. If JEM cannot flee and its vehicles are destroyed, JEM could lose respect and be disabled," stated Abdul Muhammad.

17. (SBU) On February 2, SLM Chairman Minni Minnawi told CDA Fernandez that JEM's actions have drawn all the other rebel factions together. He said that he is coordinating with prominent field commanders Ali Karbino, Bahar Abu Gharda, and Abdallah Banda and others who have been tricked and threatened by Khalil. He said that

they are in frequent contact with, but will not participate in a Sudanese Armed Forces assault on Muhajarriya. Minnawi noted that he does not trust the SAF and is afraid that if they intervene SAF could turn on them and attack SLM/MM at any point. According to Minnawi, the outcome in Muhajarriya will be decided by who is the cleverest at maneuvering a political or military solution favorable to their side.

18. (SBU) Comment: If it is true that JEM is out of fuel (this is a frequent assertion which is not yet proved), JEM may accept the safe zone proposal while using the time gained to seek resupply. Khalil Ibrahim is unlikely to accept the "status quo ante" as he would lose face under such a scenario. And while JEM's incursion has weakened Minnawi and strengthened the GOS, it seems that the news of Minni's political demise were premature. Meanwhile the government is debating whether to try and destroy JEM's vehicles outside Muhajarriya (Defense Minister Abdel Rahim's preference) or whether to allow JEM to remain in the area but without supply routes to slowly squeeze them in place (NISS Chief's Ghosh's reported preference). Either way, JEM's foolish attack into South Darfur seems to have weakened it and turned other rebels against it, and played right into the hands of the GOS. It is still possible that JEM will seek to break out from the area and try to reach the safety of the Chadian border - if it can.

FERNANDEZ